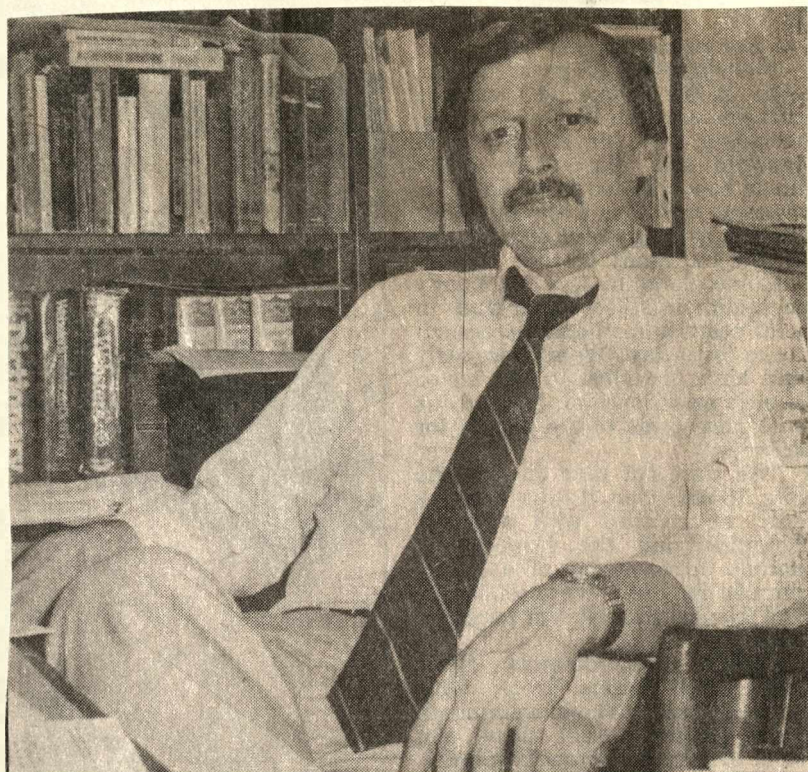




Baker on folk literature: "I think people right now are recognizing and appreciating it more than they did 10 or 15 years ago."

Folklore **OCT 20 1985** Community Affairs File
Local stories also included

Once upon a time, there were no such things as history books or story books — or books of any kind, for that matter. All knowledge was transmitted by word-of-mouth from one person to another. And so the tales would grow.

Even these days, stories still circulate that way.

Ronald L. Baker, a professor of English and chairperson of the English Department at Indiana State University, has written a book called "Hoosier Folk Legends." The book lists 305 Hoosier legends and groups them into four categories: supernatural and religious legends (such as an image of Jesus in the clouds near Fontanet), legends about particular people (such as Jesse James, who supposedly spent a night near Terre Haute), legends about particular places (such as the

Prairieton Blue Hole), and modern legends (such as the Ghost of Burford Hall).

Here's one modern legend that was originally collected in Terre Haute in January 1972.

"Danny was working on the road over by Brazil one evening when this flying saucer went over. All the lights on the machinery went out, and all the equipment stopped. And after the saucer flew over they tried to turn the machinery back on, but it wouldn't start. But the mechanics couldn't find anything wrong with it."

Other folk legends include the one about the corpse that sat up at Rosedale, the house in Terre Haute with a boy's face imprinted on it as the result of a wreck and the room that changes color in the White Castle at Rockville.

Community Affairs File

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See other articles on Baker in
Folklore (IN)

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C. A. series. These games tonight will
be unusually interesting from the fact
that there are but two more games in
the series. Thus far Temple leads with
but one lost game; but the Business
Men and Ault's team are close with but
two games lost. The first game will be
called at 8 o'clock between Christy's
men and the Business Men. The other
two games will be between Rippetoe and
Temple and Ault and Heinig.

A SUICIDE'S GHOST.

**Said to be Perambulating on East
Poplar Street.**

**Glick's Blacksmith Shop the Headquar-
ters of the Supposed Ghost.**

The ghost of a suicide is said to have
appeared several nights in succession
recently at George Glick's blacksmith
shop, corner of Twenty-fifth and Poplar
street, and there is intense excitement
in the neighborhood as a result. The
people living in that locality are united
in declaring that the ghost is the de-
parted spirit of a man named Drake
who committed suicide at Corey, Ind., a
year or two ago. He had previously
worked for Glick several years.

Rumors that the blacksmith shop
was haunted gained circulation several
weeks ago but it was not until this week
that any excitement was caused by the
supposed apparition. It was reported
that the ghost of Drake materialized
shortly before midnight and going to
the smith's shop began hammering on
the anvil. Frank Effner, who conducts
a saloon within a short distance of the
shop, being skeptical on the subject of
ghosts decided to make an investiga-
tion. He heard the music of the anvil
until he approached within a few feet
of the shop when the hammering ceas-
ed. Effner hastily retraced his foot-
steps and according to report the ghost
chased him to his home and threw a
horse shoe at him as he darted into his
door. Several other people claim to
have seen the apparition which it is
claimed bears a striking resemblance to
the dead blacksmith.

THE WABASH.

**Big Four Railroad is Strength-
ening the Embankment at**

B. Y. P. U. convention, Chattanooga
Tenn., July 15th—18th.
National Educational Association
Milwaukee, July 6th—9th.
Epworth League convention, Toronto
July 14th—18th.
Elks Reunion, Minneapolis, July 6th
—10th.
Thirty-first National Encampment
G. A. R. Buffalo, N. Y., in August.
Tennessee centennial, Nashville
Tenn., May 1st—November 1st.

THE CLAIM ALLOWED.

**The State Pays a Claim Filed By Vigo
County.**

The claim of Vigo county against the
state for erroneous taxes of former years
refunded by the county commissioner
was yesterday allowed by the auditor of
state and paid to the County Auditor.
The amount of the claim was \$1,061.98,
of which \$530.98, or one half, will be
paid to John H. Hunter, the expert ac-
countant, for his services in discovering
the error.

Ex Commissioner James Cox has also
had his claim against the county satis-
fied being paid the sum of \$951.12.

CHAMBERLAIN MAD.

London, March 25—The Globe this after-
noon says it has good authority for say-
ing that the secretary of state for the co-
lonies, Mr. Chamberlain, acting under
great parliamentary pressure, has seen
President Kruger a strongly worded pro-
test against alleged breaches of the Lon-
don convention upon the part of the
South African Republic.

It is presumed the infractions of the
agreement referred to consisted of the re-
ported understanding with Germany and
the recent defensive alliance entered be-
tween the Transvaal and the Orange Free
state.

J. J. Hager, the popular fish man at
428 Ohio street, quotes prices on fish as
follows:

Roe shad.....	45c each
Halibut.....	20c per lb
Smelts.....	10c per lb
Flounders.....	10c per lb
Fresh cod fish.....	10c per lb
Lobsters live or boiled.....	25c per lb

He also has many other varieties, be-
sides a full line of game, oysters, poultry,
etc. Give him your order. 428
Ohio street.

WILL GO TO EVANSVILLE.

The Evansville Y. M. C. A. basket ball
team is endeavoring to secure a game
in that city with the Terre Haute team.
It is very probable that the local bas-
ket ball players will go to Evansville on
the evening of April 6th; and if they do
they will bring home another pennant.

Serre Haute Evening Gazette
Thurs., Mar. 25, 1897, pg. 5

Houses

Indiana Historical Landmarks TH Star 10/28/74



Historic Houses
The Preston House
(WV)

Community Affairs File

IS IT HAUNTED?—Legends of a ghost at Preston House, 1339 Poplar St., have prevailed in Terre Haute for well over a century, the product of persistent rumors in 1832 that a young woman was murdered and entombed there. The house, vacant for several years, was constructed between 1823 and 1826. (Photo by Kadel)

Fireplace Tomb—

Preston House 'Ghost' Is Halloween Favorite

By LARRY GIBBS

Assistant Editor, The Star

Sometimes when the moon is full and the clouds of night sweep low across the trees, dancing shadows recall an eerie tale at 1339 Poplar Street.

The story is old, almost as old as the house itself.

Yet, for 140 years the legend of the haunted Preston House has endured and the advent of another Halloween has revived

stories of the ghost who supposedly walks its wooden floors.

It is a mysterious blending of historical fact and supernatural conjecture, of sober reflection and youthful imagination.

The house, oldest in the city, was constructed between 1823 and 1826 by Major George W. Dewees, a French immigrant who brought his pretty young wife, Matilda, and small son to

Terre Haute from New Orleans in 1820.

+ + +

Described as grim, with gray hair and whiskers and "a very sour look," Major Dewees, already in his early fifties when he settled here, offered a gruff contrast to the lovely Matilda, who had not yet reached her 30th birthday.

Despite a forboding appearance, Major Dewees was quite active in civic affairs of the fledgling riverfront community. In addition to operating his general store, he served as president of the library board and was one of the stockholders of the local bank.

The mansion Major Dewees designed for his wife and son truly was one of the showplaces of the American frontier when it was completed late in 1826.

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over

Known as "The Lawn," the splendid mansion dominated an estate of several acres. Stone for its foundation was brought by ox cart from quarries miles distant, while the finest black walnut was selected for its floors. Bricks forming a huge circular drive were laid by skilled workmen.

+ + +

The mansion's main floor rises some six feet above ground level with the lower floor half above and half below ground. A long flight of stairs leads to a porch across the front.

A huge, wide door opens into a spacious hallway, which divides the upper floor into two huge square rooms, each with its own massive fireplace.

The walls are 18 inches thick at the second floor level, but grow gradually thicker nearer the foundation. While constructed as an elegant residence, the house also was designed as a practical fortress against the always present threat of hostile Indians.

Although moving into the completed house must have been a joyous occasion for the family, it marked the beginning of a series of ironic and tragic events.

Soon after the major and his wife had set up housekeeping, their young son was scalped late one night by a band of marauding Indians. Their son's death had a crushing effect on the couple, who steadily became more withdrawn in the reclusive mansion, situated a full mile from the cluster of small buildings along the river that was Terre Haute in those days.

+ + +

Perhaps loss of their son was a factor in deterioration of the couple's marriage, which resulted in a separation agreement between the major and his wife on March 15, 1832.

The agreement, entered into by Major Dewees and John D. Early, who represented Matilda, called for a payment of \$2,300 by the major to his wife and provided for division of household property.

Mysteriously, Matilda was never seen or heard from again after the agreement was signed. Two months later, the major filed for and was granted a divorce when the court recorded "the defendant — Matilda — although called, comes not, but makes default."

In succeeding legal matters, including preparation of the major's last will and testament, Early always appeared on behalf of Matilda.

In November following his divorce, Major Dewees was arrested and jailed after he shot Capt. James Wasson in the back during an argument that erupted on election day. Nine months later, a Parke County jury found him guilty of assault and battery for which he paid a fine and was freed.

+ + +

Already known for his quick temper, the major's shooting of Wasson added credence to rumors that he had killed his wife during a quarrel at the secluded mansion. Matilda's sudden disappearance and the absence of any credible explanation for her departure had aroused suspicion throughout the community.

Major Dewees was severely ill during the winter of 1833 when his niece, Elizabeth Paterson arrived from Pennsylvania to care for him. When he died on Nov. 29, 1834, he left half the estate to his niece and the other half to his sister in Pennsylvania.

The mansion had several owners until 1843, when Nathaniel Preston purchased it from Demas Deming for \$6,000.

During the few years immediately after the major's death, while the house changed hands several times, the discovery was made that ensured survival of suspicions that Matilda had been murdered and entombed in the mansion.

Symmetrical in virtually every respect, the two rooms on the main floor of the mansion feature identical fireplaces which extend from floor to ceiling. The fireplace in the west room has cupboards, each about six feet tall, built into each side of the chimney for storage and display of books.

+ + +

The fireplace in the east room has an identical cupboard built into its north side, but on the south, where a cupboard likely was constructed originally, there is a bricked space, large enough to entomb a human body, extending from floor to ceiling.

The bricked enclosure, obviously out of place in the design of the floorplan, has been the object of speculation for several generations.

The late Mrs. Natalie Preston Smith, who died last year at age 94, was the last of the Preston family to occupy the house during a 130-year period. Although she resided at the Terre Haute House for several years before her death, she continued to visit the old house daily, where she cared for several stray cats.

While still living in the historic mansion, Mrs. Smith recalled that on one occasion she used a poker to probe between the bricks of the mysterious fireplace column. After discovering an empty space inside, she withdrew the poker, only to release a foul, musty odor. She never proceeded further to discover the contents of the column.

+ + +

Mrs. Smith's will named Richard and Jane Van Allen, 2 Potomac Ave., managers of the Terre Haute House, as heirs to the historic home.

And so the mystery remains unsolved. Was Matilda Dewees murdered and her remains encased forever in a house that has since been surrounded by a sprawling community? Or did

she simply disappear in 1832 to begin a new life somewhere, never to be heard of again?

In all probability, no one will ever know. But on Halloween night, more than one young trick-or-treater likely will cross the street while making his rounds, rather than walk past the silent, but mysterious, house at 1339 Poplar Street.

percent during the one-year contract, according to Murphy.

Teachers want a 9-percent increase on whatever a teacher made last year, plus increments. The union is requesting \$140,000 more this year than last year to be distributed on a percentage basis. It would be more fair to experienced teachers, union president Dwight Connelly said.

If the board does not drop this lateral condition for bargaining, the MACT/Illinois Education Association/National Education Association has no alternative but to file an unfair labor practice with the Illinois Education Labor Relations Board.

The letter asked the board to meet immediately with the union to negotiate in good faith or submit the issues to binding arbitration and end the strike. Lack of a written response by 1 p.m. today would be interpreted as a rejection, Connelly said. Murphy said a written reply would be issued today.

iff, nation

er to lose a part-time job, Mellinger charged.

She should get a "sufficient" amount of cash to compensate her for that retaliation, the lawsuit states.

Mellinger left the Sheriff's Department and became a Vigo County adult probation officer in December. She remains employed there.

"I can't understand a girl filing something like that when she really knows it's wrong," Vigo County Sheriff Andrew T. Atelaki said Tuesday in an interview.

The sheriff said a number of women work for him, and Mellinger was switched to the evening shift because another woman had family problems and needed the change.

The lawsuit says the merit board rejected Mellinger's application based wholly or in part upon defendant Atelaki's opposition to her application, all of which was based solely upon her sex.

Atelaki said the decision was really up to the merit board. "All five of them didn't even vote for her," he said.

ception

conomic development.

DePugh said his firm "likes for a neighborhood to work with us and support us. Without the support of the neighborhood and the market study, we would not go forward in our community."

He added his firm is willing to meet with a Farrington's Grove neighborhood association and include it in planning.

Association President Dave Buchanan of 1205 S. Sixth St. told the council he was "very pleased with what I'm hearing."

Reading from a prepared statement, Buchanan said, "Special care must be given to the style of architecture, density and overall use of the land, with regard to the predominant characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood."

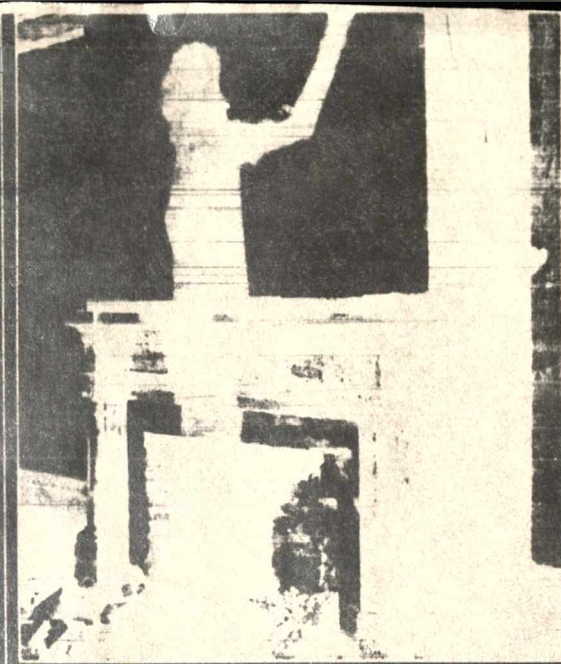
See related stories, A3

ch '84 property tax relief

ossible the Legislature next year will be asked to legalize the overpayment.

State officials say it's too late to correct the error this year.

State-financed property tax relief, which totals less than 20 percent in some counties and more than that in others, comes from the government's property tax replacement fund. The fund gets most of



Tribune-Star/Jim Avello

Shadows from the past? Was the mysterious Preston House abandoned because it is haunted by the restless spirit of Matilda DeWeese, or has it gained a reputation for being haunted because it was abandoned?

Matilda's memory

Did husband kill her, entomb her in wall?

By Liz Ciancone
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

Incredible legends of the Wabash Valley

11th in a series

Whatever happened to young Matilda DeWeese? Did she end her days happily, surrounded by friends and family in New Orleans? Or is the mystery of the Preston House true? Are her remains walled up next to the fireplace in the east room?

In any event, the spirit of Matilda DeWeese is said to haunt the house where she was so unhappy.

Those who have seen her, report a silent ghostly shape coming out of the east room, gliding silently to the center of the hall where it stands for a time before turning back into the room from which it came.

Others report hearing the spirit of Matilda. Crying as she relives the experience of finding her only son scalped by Indians? Moaning in unhappy social isolation? Shrieking in agony as she was murdered?

Matilda was at least 30 years younger than her dour husband, a well-known, but hardly well-liked, local dry-goods merchant. A solitary and mysterious figure, he was supposed to have "other sources of income." He was also a man of violent temper, once found guilty of attempted murder.

The couple lived in the house Major DeWeese built and christened "The Lawn." Although DeWeese was a man of means, he was parsimonious and not only discouraged his wife from entertaining, he prevented social contact with the Markle family and

others she enjoyed.

It was worse after the murder of their son, and eventually the couple agreed to separate and divorce. Divorce was uncommon in the early 19th century, but the papers were filed in Vigo County. The divorce was never finalized because Matilda simply disappeared. She didn't show up in court and she never claimed the items awarded to her.

Major DeWeese answered queries by saying she had returned to New Orleans, yet she never arrived there. Local rumor was that her estranged husband had murdered her and stashed the body in one of the cupboards built on either side of the fireplace.

Certainly the architectural symmetry of the house has been doctored in the east room. Originally both sides of both fireplaces had cupboards where the major kept his books. The west room still has two cupboards, but the east room has only one.

Where there should be a cupboard, there is a plastered wall. Moreover the plaster, although very old, is not original!

Does that wall contain the last resting place of Matilda? No one has ever opened the wall to look. Out of fear of ghosts? Out of respect for the body that might be there?

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Terre Haute

Naomi C. Eversole

Naomi C. Eversole, 74, 1001 Pauline Ave., North Terre Haute, died at 9:45 p.m. Monday at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital, of natural causes. She was former house mother at Home. She was born April 1, 1915, in Sullivan County to Tom and Stella McCammon. Survivors include her son, Joseph Eversole, three daughters, Naomi Eversole, Thomas J. Eversole, and Jerry D. Eversole, all of Terre Haute.

Wabash

Arville Ferguson

Arville Ferguson, 88, 1001 Pauline Ave., North Terre Haute, died at 9:45 p.m. Monday at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. He was born May 24, 1897, in Sullivan County to Howard Ferguson and Mary Kennedy Ferguson. He was a retired coal miner. He was married to Mary Kennedy Ferguson, died in 1978. Survivors include one daughter, Aileen Hoke, Carlisle, Pa.; one son, Leon, Greencove Springs, Ohio; four grandchildren; four great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild. He was a member of United Mine Workers of America. Services are at 1:30 p.m. Thursday at the Rev. Blaine Emery Chapel. Burial is in Indian Creek Cemetery. Visitation is today from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

Harold H. Griffith

Harold H. Griffith, 70, Route 2 and formerly of Terre Haute, died at 6:10 p.m. Monday at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. He was a retired lineman.

Funeral

Gertrude G. Aker, 74, 1001 Pauline Ave., North Terre Haute, died at 9:45 p.m. Monday at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. She was a retired house mother at Home. Services are at 11 a.m. today at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. Burial is in the Terre Haute Regional Cemetery.

Ola Beatrice Chappin, 74, 1001 Pauline Ave., North Terre Haute, died at 9:45 p.m. Monday at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. She was a retired house mother at Home. Services are at 11 a.m. today at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. Burial is in the Terre Haute Regional Cemetery.

Carl E. Davis, 74, 1001 Pauline Ave., North Terre Haute, died at 9:45 p.m. Monday at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. He was a retired house mother at Home. Services are at 11 a.m. today at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. Burial is in the Terre Haute Regional Cemetery.

Ralph Fallowfield, 74, 1001 Pauline Ave., North Terre Haute, died at 9:45 p.m. Monday at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. He was a retired house mother at Home. Services are at 11 a.m. today at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. Burial is in the Terre Haute Regional Cemetery.

Earl E. Gentry, 74, 1001 Pauline Ave., North Terre Haute, died at 9:45 p.m. Monday at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. He was a retired house mother at Home. Services are at 11 a.m. today at the Terre Haute Regional Hospital. Burial is in the Terre Haute Regional Cemetery.

Daily sta

Vigo court en

Small claim
Oak Ridge Boys
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vs. Midwest Satellite
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Jerry L. Stough v
Myers, R. Jackson v
Johnson

Valley Professional S
vs. Dennis Howell
Hillman Jewelers
Hendricks and Tedd
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Jo Tsai and Jamm
Shirly Gupta

Complain

Monroe E. David
Corban, Emma Corba
Bloomfield State Ba
Joy, Robert Joy, Del
Lena Joy
Waterfield Mortgage
Dale S. Eberts Jr., Rob
and John Doe, a

Phone, whiskey stood sentry in Martin Sheets resting spot

Community Affairs File

T s OCT 25 1985

By Dave Delaney
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

FOLKLORE

Incredible legends of the Wabash Valley

Sixth in a series

Folks used to say Martin Sheets was something of an eccentric. After all, what kind of a guy would put a phone in his mausoleum?

That's exactly what Sheets did in the family plot in Highland Lawn Cemetery at 4520 Wabash Ave. before he died in 1926. Local legend has it he stashed a bottle of whiskey in the mausoleum that has two gray pillars beside its heavy metal door, now coated with a green patina.

The idea was that if he ever woke up he could call a taxi and have a drink while waiting for it to arrive. Ronald L. Baker, chairman of the English Department at Indiana State University, has studied the case and has collected 11 versions of the story from a variety of sources.

However, there's another twist to the story that continues to confound those associated with the

cemetery to this day.

"Every so often, flowers are delivered to the door of the mausoleum," reports Dorothy Allan, former clerk at Highland Lawn. "No one has any idea who's putting them there."

Allan said she called up all the local flower shops to see if they knew anything about it and they didn't. "I also called the banks and savings and loan places to see if there was any kind of trust for the Sheets Mausoleum," added Allan. That, too, proved to be a dead end.

"I thought I was getting to be a pretty good detective on this, but I couldn't solve it," Allan added with a smile.

The most recent flowers on the mausoleum door were silk and woven into a wreath of leaves.

It's been many years since the phone was in the mausoleum. Baker's book, "Hoosier Folk Legends," said some complained about the telephone poles and lines strung up to the building and had the board of regents take them down.

"The phone was gone when I started working out here in 1963," said Bob Haney, an employee at Highland Lawn. "I've heard that old man Sheets always wore a cowboy hat and was driven around by a chauffeur," Haney said. Some say he made his money in oil.

Baker's book said Sheets supposedly lived in a large brick home where the Goodie Shop now stands on Ohio Street near Seventh Street.

Community Affairs File

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Phone In Tomb? It's No Rumor

S. AUG 10 1981

In the past year or so I have read in the local newspapers articles dealing with the subject "Did Mort Sheets have a telephone installed in his mausoleum in Highland Lawn Cemetery?"

The last comment I heard on this subject was a commentator on the local news telecast on Monday, July 13, 1981 with a segment dealing with area folklore.

It seems as though all who have been dealing with the subject are undecided with the truthfulness of the story but all are inclined to more or less accept it as a myth or rumor. The zenith of Mort Sheets career, or when I knew him, was immediately prior to, during and after World War I. He had recently returned from Texas where he had reportedly struck it rich in oil and it was so accepted by anyone concerned.

He bought a residence on Ohio Street on what is now the parking lot of the Terre Haute First National Bank next to the building now occupied by the Goodie Shop. He had the Terre Haute Monument Company dismantle and re-erect his mausoleum in Highland Lawn Cemetery. I, at that time, was commercial superintendent of the Indiana Bell Telephone Company at 665 Ohio Street, the building has since been razed and was across the street from the Sheets' residence.

I personally know that he did have a Bell telephone installed in his mausoleum. I remember of Nat Crawford, who was the local manager, coming to my desk and telling me that Mort Sheets had just signed an order to have the telephone installed. I also remember that the plant department of the telephone company had some difficulty in de-

ciding how to run the line to the mausoleum, whether it should be overhead or underground as there was no poles in the cemetery.

At that time it was considered no big deal or oddity and no one thought anything unusual about it because all who knew about the installation knew Mort Sheets.

To anyone interested you can put your minds to rest as I do know that he did have a Bell telephone installed in his mausoleum.

To those of you who never knew Mort Sheets, and I doubt if there are many living now, if you want to know more of his eccentricities read on.

Let me describe Mort Sheets to you. I knew him personally, not intimately, but intimately enough. He was a powerfully built man, with full chest, massive shoulders, thick neck, exceptionally dark skin, a black van dyke beard and eyes that you felt when he looked at you. He wore cowboy boots, a Texas hat and a black shirt.

One episode that I remember in my recollection of Mort Sheets: At that time directly across the street from my office was a building occupied on the second floor by the Tuller Hotel and Dining Room. The ground floor contained Buff Kaufmann's Grocery and the west room housed Newhart Brothers Garage and agency for the Reo Auto and Reo Speedwagon.

The rooms are now occupied by the Goodie Shop. Next door west was the Mort Sheets residence. Abe Brewer, father-in-law of Phil Newhart, managed the garage. Parking on Ohio Street at that time was diagonal. It was the practice of Abe Brewer each morning to bring the cars out of the garage and park them on the street and park some in front of Mort Sheets

residence, to which Mort strenuously and vocally objected.

He contended he had jurisdiction over the street in front of his house. Abe contended he did not. This running feud was brought to a head rather abruptly one morning and I witnessed (an event) as I was parking my car. Mort had parked his long black Studebaker touring car in front of his house and was sitting in the front seat. Abe came out of the garage with a car and parked it in front of Mort's residence. Mort told him to move it and Abe refused. Mort reached down inside his car and came up with a .45 revolver and drew a bead on Abe. Abe moved the car.

Another example of the individuality of Mort Sheets is evidenced in a monument he had erected in a small cemetery west and south of West Terre Haute. The monument is the trunk of a tree with deep grooved bark. On it are depicted rodents and vines. They are not merely carved in relief but are full bodied and cut separating them from the tree trunk. To me this is an excellent example of an accomplished stonemason. To anyone who appreciates art is well worth their time to go see.

During this same period Mort Sheets purchased a large house on the west side of Seventh Street north of the Union Hospital and made it a gift to the hospital as a home for nurses. He had a sign in large letters attached to the front reading "Morton A. & Susan Sheets Nurses Home."

Knowing him as I did I believe it can truthfully be said he is the only one of his kind.

DOLPH CROSS
Terre Haute

Folklore (W)

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Community Affairs File



Tribune-Star/Jim Avelis

Ghost story time: Woods' students Socorro Sendejas, Ruth Sendejas, Susan Eller and Stephanie Hickerson are just trying to scare each other ... but who is that down the hall watching them?

The Faceless Nun

Community Affairs File

Legend still stalks Foley's halls

OCT 20 1985

By Dave Delaney
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

Incredible legends of the Wabash Valley

First of a series

The Faceless Nun lives on at St. Mary-of-the-Woods College — at least in legend.

Generations of students at the college have passed on the legend of the faceless nun who occasionally walks the corridors of Foley Hall, now nearly deserted. In fact, it's said a young woman could hardly get through her first year of college there without hearing about this eerie nun, who is nameless besides being faceless.

Not only do the students spread accounts of the mystery among themselves, the story also has gained a wider audience in "Hoosier Folk Legends," written by Indiana State University professor Ronald L. Baker.

In Baker's book, he said "Other nuns began to encounter the faceless nun...all over campus. They finally had to have all the buildings on the campus exorcised by the priests."

Like most legends, there are several versions.

"The story I heard was that a nun was painting a portrait of another nun and got everything finished except the face," said Linda Peters, a St. Louis, Mo., senior who heard the story her first month on campus four years ago.

"The nun who did the painting died and the other nun used to walk around at night trying to find somebody else to finish the portrait," she explained.

Sarah Batt, director of residence life, heard the story as a freshman eight years ago. "There was

a student painting in the art department late at night when she heard someone come up behind her," Batt related. "It was a sister but she didn't see her face because the nun walked out of the room."

Batt said the student became scared the next day when explaining the incident to her art teacher. "The habit the student described was worn by the nuns here in the 1840s," Batt said. "The person she saw was a ghost."

Peters said students retelling the ancient tale are often able to scare themselves and others, especially if the story is told in the right setting, night being best.

"When I was a freshman some seniors took us to the cemetery here and told us the story in what they described as an initiation," said Colette Campau, a sophomore from Saginaw, Mich. Sister Wendy Workman said the story of the Faceless Nun is even passed on during the summer at The Woods when 7- to 14-year-olds come on campus during camping weeks.

"The counselors once told the story to the young kids at night outside," she related, "and someone showed up dressed as the faceless nun." She said many kids started crying so the practice was discontinued.

FACELESS NUN

Foley Hall

Folklore (WV)

10/27/82 The Woods 9

Unseen face characterizes ghost of Foley Hall

By Kathy G. Miller
The Woods Staff Writer

The Woods 10/27/82

'Tis a history handed from ages down; a nurse's tale, which children, open ey'd and mouth'd devour and thus as garrulous ignorance relates we learn it and believe.

Southey's "Thataba"

The faceless nun. The huge black bird. The dark angel of Guerin Hall. These are just a few of the legends that have been circulating at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College for years. It's generally about this time of year that the stories of the faceless nun, slip into full circulation and tend to become more intricate. Esther Newport, S.P. knows a great deal about one of these legends.

From 1932 until 1964, S. Esther headed the College art department. Her duties included teaching painting, art education, and the art history. From 1936 until 1961, S. Esther belonged to the Catholic Art Association, which was created for the improvement of Catholic Sacred Art. The Association completed its goals and broke up.

During the years that the College employed S. Esther as an instructor several unusual events occurred. During the early 1930s the legend of the faceless

nun began.

One afternoon two cleaning women were dusting the big studio in Foley Hall when S. Esther entered the room. One of them asked S. Esther if she had seen the nun who had been looking for her. S. Esther said she'd not been contacted and asked for a general description of the nun. The cleaning woman pointed to the front of her dress and said that the nun had a pleat in the center of her habit. S. Esther thought the nun that the cleaning woman described might be a visiting sister, but the cleaning woman, who was acquainted with the woman that S. Esther spoke of, said that it was not her. Asked for a more precise description, the cleaning lady said, "She didn't have a face, sister."

S. Esther dismissed the idea by laughingly asking the other cleaning woman if she didn't think her companion was seeing things. Apparently, the first cleaning lady was the only one who had seen anything.

Within a few days, college students were starting to get calls from the mysterious nun. Isabelle Kennedy, then an art major, was in the big studio. At

that time the art studio was infrequently used as it was very cold in the winter months. Nonetheless, Kennedy had a watercolor that had to be finished. When S. Esther came in, Kennedy told her she'd had a caller. Kennedy asked her if the nun with the habit that was pleated in the front had contacted her. S. Esther said she had not seen the mysterious nun.

Kennedy was surprised, stating that just as the visiting nun departed, she heard what she identified as rosary beads in the hall.

When asked for a description of the visitor, Kennedy said she could not see the nun's face as she had stood in front of a sunny window.

That, however, was not the last time Kennedy had to deal with the intriguing situation. One afternoon, S. Esther found Kennedy standing in the middle of the studio gazing into space. Teasingly, S. Esther asked Kennedy if she'd been frightened. Kennedy replied, "No. But I wish that nun would quit bothering me while I'm working. And she's always gets between me and the light so I can't see her face."

Soon the apparition was expanding its visits to College guests. A prominent Chicago author was at the College because S. Esther was illustrating a book for her. The pair were in the big studio when the frightened author jumped to her feet, pointed across the room and said, "What IS that?" Not seeing whatever the author was speaking about S. Esther said to describe exactly what she saw.

The author said "something" had materialized before them, moved quickly across the room and vanished. The place where it chose to disappear had held a staircase at one time.

Several children of the old minum school said that they had seen an unusual nun occasionally at that particular staircase. The nun was odd in that apparently she did not touch the steps when she went upstairs. The children, according to S. Esther, claimed that was the same sister who kissed them before they went to bed every night.

Neither the children nor the visiting author were aware of the stories of the faceless nun nor any other legend about the campus.

Finally, S. Esther heard a noise which had no explanation. During a drawing class a swishing, scraping noise, which was coming from beneath the floor got so loud that S. Esther had to stop lecturing until it was finished. After the noise ceased, S. Esther made the students feel at ease by telling them that extensive repairs were being made on the ceiling of the room beneath them. Later that day, S. Esther was surprised to find that repairs had been finished for two weeks.

After this incident, S. Esther went to the Superior General of the Congregation of the Sisters of Providence to ask that a mass be said for the "Ghost of Foley Hall." Mass was offered and, according to S. Esther, the ghost has not been seen since.

A lot of stories that people hear about the faceless nun are built up over the years, according to S. Esther. She said people continue to add any wild idea that comes to mind to make the legend a little bigger and better. Nonetheless, for some time, S. Esther was afraid to go to the big studio.

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Community Affairs File

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Moaning, laughing ghosts were the item in Burford

By Dave Delaney
Tribune-Star Staff Reporter

Incredible legends of the Wabash Valley

Second in a series

Did ghosts chase the women out of Burford Hall?

The Indiana State University building was originally a women's dormitory. It supposedly was haunted by ghosts from the late 1960s until around 1982.

Just before one Christmas, some women in Burford Hall kept hearing what they described as ghost-like noises. One was a moaning sound, another was a woman laughing hysterically while a third sounded as though someone were crying. Search as they might, the source of the eerie noises eluded them.

Another incident reported at Burford was when the coeds locked their doors and set their alarms, only to find unlocked doors and alarm clocks turned off the next morning.

Another unsolved incident had to do with toilets being flushed, accompanied by screams.

Then in 1982 college officials decided to remove the women from the building and turn it into a male-only residence. Today, five fraternities occupy the six-story building.

"We took the women out of Burford Hall because we needed more space for the men" said Paul Edgerton, vice president of student affairs at ISU. "We could consolidate the women in other units on campus."

The alleged presence of ghosts in the building is probably not known by most Burford residents, although some are aware of the earlier incidents.

"The first time I heard about this was a few years ago when we were sitting around here during the graveyard shift," said Barbie Sparr, receptionist at Burford Hall the past three years. She said then-Burford Hall director Rande Gray told the story around 3 a.m.

"I never believed it," said Sparr, "but it was interesting trivia. I think ghost stories explain things that people can't explain themselves."

The ghosts of Burford Hall are included in the book "Hoosier Folk Legends" written by Ronald L. Baker, a professor of English at ISU.

In one account, a coed said "...for two weeks straight, sounds began to be heard on each floor. They were in the halls and sometimes in the rooms. The girls could hear sounds of someone barfing, laughing or moaning, but no one ever saw anyone."

The English professor said many legends also exist about "foundation sacrifices" — which is people dying in buildings under construction. "Sometimes they'd mix human blood with the mortar," explained Baker.

House, barn spooked by Parke poltergeist

Community Affairs File

By Patricia Pastore
Tribune-Star Correspondent

Incredible legends of the Wabash Valley

13th in a series

BELLMORE — No house where supernatural events reportedly occurred in Parke County has received more notoriety than one on a knoll a half-mile west of here.

The extraordinary number of significant paranormal events experienced by residents and visitors to "Hill House" caused many citizens to believe it was inhabited by ghosts. A novel, "The Dark Fantastic," written by Margaret Echard, is a story about a haunted house in Parke County. Echard is a descendant of the original owners of Hill House.

Juliet O. Snowden, 72, of Rockville said she documented her findings about the property when researching information for "Legends & Lore," a book she wrote about Parke County.

Snowden said when the house was being built masons had a problem erecting the chimney because the bricks would tumble during the night and workmen's tools vanished during the day only to reappear in other locations.

When construction was completed and the family moved in, the inexplicable experiences continued. One night the family's clothing became airborne, went through the open windows and wrapped around the branches of the large old trees surrounding the house.

The residents did not possess a ladder high enough to have done the annoying deed. Some of the

articles of wearing apparel were wrapped around branches which were too small to support the weight of a human being.

Snowden suggested it was probably was the work of a poltergeist. She said she too had lived in a haunted house.

"When you live in a house with a poltergeist, you'd better believe in them," Snowden said. "Just because a person is dead doesn't make them ideal. Some are mischievous."

In 1971 Bill Soey, then a resident of Nysville, said the barn on the property was as spooky as the house. He said the barn doors would fly open, wagons would come rolling out, rear up on their back wheels and wave their tongues before returning to the barn.

Other accounts of such phenomena include incidents Edith Van Hess related to her friend Floy Norris.

Norris, 84, a former Bellmore resident, lived in a home about 200 feet from the famous haunted house.

"Edith told me her grandmother, when a teen-ager, was visiting a girlfriend there. They were lying on a bed talking when they heard the sound of scissors. When they looked toward the sound, the girls saw a curtain being cut but there was nothing there."

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Community Affairs File

George — not Casper — inhabits this house

By Patricia Pastore
Tribune-Star Correspondent

CLINTON — Mysterious happenings have caused local residents to believe a large brick house near the town's business district is haunted by a friendly ghost.

Since a young couple and their four children moved into the residence more than 21 years ago, a significant number of unexplainable events occurred. Shortly after they moved into the structure, several citizens told them it was haunted.

"I lost two baby-sitters over it," the woman who occupies the house said.

She said many times a storage-room door on the second story has opened when no one was near it and then a sound like footsteps was heard in the hallway and back stairway. A bottle of bath salts sitting in a window sill floated about two-thirds the way across the bathroom in mid-air and dropped to the floor, she added.

When a perplexing experience occurs, it is blamed on a ghost the family named George, the woman said. She said when her youngest son was an infant unable to crawl, she left him sleeping in his crib while she rested in an adjoining room. Aroused from a nap by the child's fussing, she went into his

1985 NOV 2 Community Affairs File

Incredible legends of the Wabash Valley

14th in a series

room and found him on the floor playing with his father's shoe.

"He couldn't stand up by himself and there is no way he could have climbed over the bed rail without help," she said.

About three years ago her son, now a young man, and two of his friends told her they saw an image of a man in the bathroom window.

"They said they could see through the figure," she said.

Before the experience, the boy told his mother he awoke one night and saw a man sleeping beside him in his bed, she added.

At times George is helpful. The woman needed items from her basement freezer. She went downstairs without turning on lights at the top of the stairs and decided she needed more illumination. Just as she was returning to turn on the lights, they flashed on, she said.

Other happenings she reported include: a drapery panel in the living room suddenly standing out horizontally, and being awakened during the night because all the lights in the house would come on.

The owners said there is no explanation for the events.

'Evil spirits' drove man away

Community Aff

OCT 28 1985

By Mary Jo Butts
Tribune-Star Correspondent

Incredible legends of the Wabash Valley

Ninth in a series

Evil spirits inhabit 29 acres of wet and wooded land in northwestern Owen County, says Lee Wagaman of Reelsville.

Wagaman, 69, bought the land from an estate more than 10 years ago. At that time, he heard tales that the former owners, a deceased husband and wife, had a reputation for an ongoing feud.

"They would yell and scream — it was terrible," he said people told him.

The husband would escape to his shack in the bogs to get some peace and quiet. Wagaman said he believes the spirits inhabiting the place still want to be left alone.

Shortly after Wagaman and his wife obtained the acreage, they bought a mobile home and tried to

beautify the area. "Lee's a hard worker and really worked with the soil to get things to grow. But the more he tried to make things look nice, the worse things would be," Mrs. Wagaman said.

Wagaman interrupted by saying, "It just seemed that something was working against me."

The straw that broke the camel's back occurred when the spirits attacked him.

"One time I was trimming some brush. All of a sudden something grabbed me from behind and threw me," he said. "I fell flat. Nobody else was around."

Wagaman said he will not go the area anymore, especially at night. "The hair actually stands up on the

back of my neck when I'm there. I'm scared," said the 6-foot, muscular man. "I'm not scared to go to other woods, but I won't go there."

After their strange experiences, the Wagamans moved to their current home in Putnam County. Although they still own the Owen County property, it has been left to grow wild with weeds and underbrush.

"I believe in spirits. Some are good and some are evil. The ones down there are definitely evil," Wagaman said.

The spirits can relax. Because as long as Wagaman owns that land, you can be assured they will be undisturbed.

Community Affairs File

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Sights, sounds haunt Edgar sites

Community Affairs File

FOLKLORE

By Terry A. Green
Tribune-Star Correspondent

Incredible legends of the Wabash Valley

12th in a series

PARIS, Ill. — Spooks have apparently steered clear of Edgar County.

Lee Hamilton, a life-long resident and Sims Township director of the Edgar County Historical Society, says there just haven't been many reports of unusual happenings or hauntings over the years. But he does recall two strange stories.

The first dates to 1905 in a small house three miles southeast of town. It was a dark, stormy day at the Smith home when a lightning bolt came down the chimney and struck the 11-year-old daughter.

The child died instantly, Hamilton said, and in those days the young were prepared for viewing immediately and buried the next day.

While the family lived in the house, nothing unusual happened. But after the family moved, people reported seeing strange lights moving from room to room.

The historian said a number of people have reported the sightings. He added that he doesn't believe there is any ghostly reason behind the lights.

"Reflections," he quickly noted. "Yet, strangers go down the road and can't figure out what the lights

are and what's going on."

There are still reports of the lights being seen.

Another ghostly legend in Paris is the Thompson house. The structure burned a few years ago, but many still remember stories of a ghostly woman stalking the halls.

Hamilton says Abraham Lincoln's aunt, Sarah Hanks, is buried near where the building stood. It's her ghost that is said to haunt the area.

"Coons and squirrels," is how Hamilton explained the noises. He said he has been in the house a number of times and saw nothing ghostly. He recalled when his father and a friend took him hunting years ago and ended up taking refuge in the building after a rainstorm hit.

His father, Charles Hamilton, passed the time telling the ghostly legend to friend Bob Pinnell.

"He told Bob someone walked the house at night. With all the rain, thunder and lightning ... Bob finally went out and stood in the rain the rest of the evening."

Community Affairs File

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Fearless foursome frightened by one of Parke's leading ghosts

By Patricia Pastore
Tribune-Star Correspondent

T: OCT 22 1985

FOLKLORE

Incredible legends

of the Wabash Valley

Third in a series

Community Affairs File

ROCKVILLE — The ghost of a woman who formerly occupied a large white house nearby roams the premises at night to prevent vandals and trespassers from destroying the only residence where she found happiness, an elderly Parke County man told four Vermillion County youths in October 1956.

Sipping a soft drink in a Rockville drug store, he said several persons told him strange, weird moaning sounds came from the house at night and some citizens had actually seen the phantom peering at them through a window.

The rural house looked harmless enough in the daylight hours as four Clinton teen-agers inspected the property from a county road. An overgrowth of brush made access to the front door nearly impossible. Frayed curtains hung from several windows where the glass was still intact.

Determined to catch the ghost the young people decided to return that night with tools to pry open the barred front door and await the

haunting.

At 11 p.m. the fearless four trudged through the briars and brush with a pry bar and two flashlights. As they came near the house the full moon slid behind a cloud and the house took on a sinister look. Strange shadows swept across the structure and a howling creature caused the group to have second thoughts about entering the abandoned home.

As the eerie night sounds continued a woman said, "Maybe there is really a spook in there." Her companions scoffed at the idea because everyone knows there are no such things as ghosts.

Once again the troop, now within 200 feet of the door, started forward. Moonbeams dancing across the second story windows revealed the austere face of a woman watching those who were attempting to penetrate her domain. Someone pointed at the window and screamed, "The ghost. She's there."

Startled by the sighting, the

crew, now terrified by the pale stern face that appeared to follow their movements with her eyes, abandoned their plans and fled to a waiting vehicle. The motor roared as the car sped down the dirt road. Loose gravel caused the driver to lose control and the car spun around causing it to face the haunted house. The ghostly figure loomed before their eyes. The dreadful woman at the window was still observing them.

After turning the vehicle around and making a safe getaway all agreed never to return to the area.

This year, 29 years after the incident occurred, a Parke County woman told one of the former ghost hunters, a Clinton resident, about a similar occurrence at the same place. Phyllis Snodgrass said her sister took her to see the house several years ago. "Everybody thought it was haunted but it wasn't. That face in the window was only a picture of a woman that someone had placed there."